

elected by the voters; a county school superintendent, appointed by the court; an assessor and collector, appointed by the court; a recorder, elected by voters; a surveyor, appointed by the court; a prosecuting attorney, elected by the Legislature; a sheriff, elected by the people; a Justice of Peace and coroner, and two constables for each precinct, elected; an estray pound keeper for each precinct, elected; two fence viewers in each precinct, elected; a road commissioner, appointed by the court and precinct road supervisors to be elected in each precinct.

The Legislature elected John W. Witt as probate judge in the county and on February 22, 1862, Judge Witt organized the county organization as follows: Selectmen, Thomas Todd, James Duke and John H. Van Wagoner; assessor and collector, John Harvey; Sheriff, Snelling M. Johnson; treasurer, John M. Murdoch; surveyor, John Sessions and Thomas H. Giles, superintendent of common schools.

The court divided the county into two precincts. All the area east of the Provo River was placed in Precinct No. 1 and Thomas Rasband was appointed Justice of the Peace with Zemira Palmer as constable. Precinct No. 2 was all the area west of the Provo River, and Horton Jacobs was named Justice of the Peace. Sidney Epperson was constable. Clerk of the court was Charles Shelton.

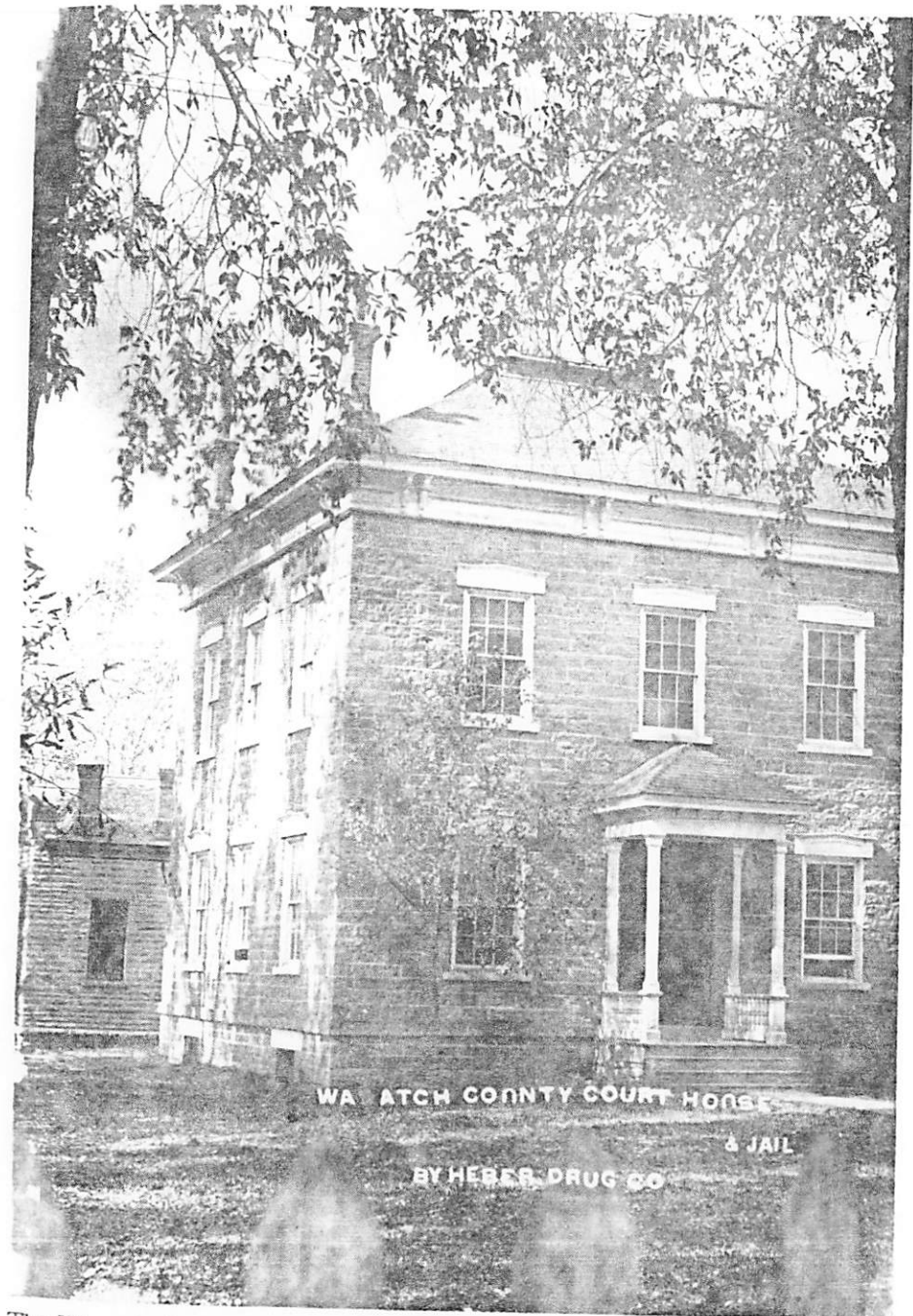
Until the time of statehood the county court headed by the Probate Judge constituted the chief legal power of the county. By act of Congress the Probate Judge was also a key figure in land titles, having power to enter claims in the U.S. Land Office and receive titles in return for those inhabiting the lands. Many land titles today are still traced back to a deed from the old probate judges.

With the passage of time the probate judge and the county court were weakened as state and federal governmental bodies began to centralize their controls. In 1864 the Federal Government restricted the legal power of the Probate Court to the settlement of estates, guardianships and divorce matters.

Additional responsibilities for the Probate or County Court came in 1872 when the selectmen were appointed by the Legislature to erect a county jail and act as directors of the establishment, and in 1878 when the court was appointed as a Board of Equalization to adjust tax assessments and appoint election judges for each precinct.

In 1880, however, provisions of the Edmunds-Tucker Act made the office of Probate Judge an appointment of the President of the United States and transferred all divorce actions from the probate to district court. Election laws were also changed, taking power away from the probate court. The office of county clerk was made an elective position in 1888 and in that same year the precinct and county road offices were consolidated into the office of District Road Supervisor.

The most drastic changes in county government came in 1896 when



The Wasatch County Court House constructed between 1878 and 1882. In the background is the County Jail.

Utah became a state. All county offices became elected positions, and included the following:

Three commissioners, two with four-year terms and one with a two-year term; county clerk, recorder, auditor, treasurer, assessor, attorney, and surveyor, all four-year terms. The offices of clerk, recorder and auditor were later combined in 1899.

Probate judges who served until statehood included Judge Witt, 1862-1868; Abram Hatch, 1868-1874; Thomas H. Giles, 1874-1884; Thomas S. Watson, 1884-1894; William S. Willes, 1894-1896.

Selectmen who served in the era prior to statehood included Thomas Todd, James Duke, John H. Van Wagoner, Sidney Epperson, Henry McMullin Sr., D. A. Sessions, David Van Wagoner, John McDonald, John W. Witt, William H. Nuttall, H. L. Anderson, John Watkins, Abram Hatch, William McDonald, George W. Clyde, Alva J. Alexander, Joseph R. Murdock, Harmon Cummings, John Clyde, Charles I. Bronson, John A. Mecham, Wilford Van Wagoner and Isaac O. Wall.

Probate judges and selectmen held many of their early meetings in the old LDS Tithing Office, a sandstone building on Main Street and First North. Later a County Court House was proposed and on March 4, 1878, the south half of the public square was selected as the court house site. Thomas H. Giles and Abram Hatch were appointed to direct the erection of the building.

Records of the construction work are incomplete, but work apparently was underway by June since the records show authorization to pay claims of contractors as of June 3, 1878. On September 2, 1878, authorization was granted by the selectmen for borrowing necessary funds to finish at least one room of the building, but work apparently lagged as construction was still being recorded in the minutes on March 8, 1880.

By September 6, 1880, the court house committee reported to the selectmen that expenditures totaled \$3,793.66. Work was apparently completed by September of 1882 when costs were reported at about \$4,600, plus \$250 for furniture. Further records show installation of a safe in 1886, landscaping in 1889 and then additional construction and remodeling to the building's present condition in 1924.

From the beginning, selectmen had many problems to solve. Roads had to be located, bridges built, rights of property safeguarded and money collected to meet expenses. This latter tax often proved the most difficult. One entry in the minutes of the selectmen reads as follows:

"The assessor reports, taxes assessed. Collected, \$147.18. Taxes past due \$327.23." The minutes of the next session tersely states: "A new assessor and collector was appointed."

Other problems facing the selectmen included requests for help in repairing or replacing bridges damaged or destroyed by flood waters, called for fence viewers to determine correct property lines, petitions to



Wasatch County officials of 1961. Front row, left to right: Wayne C. Whiting, county clerk and recorder; Guy E. Coleman, chairman of the county commission; William J. Bond, county commissioner; Walter Montgomery, county commissioner; Second row: Guy Duke, assessor; Mary Chipman, deputy clerk; June Wheeler, treasurer; Shirley Chatwin, deputy clerk; Ethel Giles, secretary to the county agent; Mary Bacon, home demonstration agent; Back Row, Paul Daniels, county agricultural agent; Floyd Witt, sheriff; Jerry Smith, deputy sheriff; A. D. Buys, justice of the peace of the Heber precinct; Albin Hansen, custodian of the court house and grounds. Richard L. Maxfield, county attorney.

establish herd ground on public domain and requests from citizens for protection from the influx of excessive livestock from other counties.

There were also the legal problems related to justice and the suppression of crime. Business licenses and franchise also had to be granted, and liquor control had to be enforced. For a period, also, the selectmen had responsibilities for directing the school precincts and the superintendent.

Statehood in 1896 brought a full county commission organization, with John Clyde, Isaac O. Wall and Wilford Van Wagoner selected as the first commissioners.

Salaries for those first selected included \$100 a year for commissioners; \$650 per year for the sheriff; \$500 per year for the clerk, with the recorder receiving \$200 per year, the surveyor \$100 per year and the county superintendent of schools \$360 per year.

Those who have served as commissioners through the years have included the following: 1897, Wilford Van Wagoner, Thomas Clotworthy, William Daybell, 1899, Thomas Clotworthy, Isaac O. Wall and Richard Jones, 1901, Henry Clift, A. M. Murdock, Henry T. Coleman, 1903, John E. Austin, F. A. Fraughton, Henry T. Coleman, 1905, John E. Austin, F. A. Fraughton, Jacob Probst, 1907, Jacob Probst, E. J.